



Vol. No 14 Issue No. 2, April-May-June 2017 * <http://threerivershistoricalsocietyaz.org>

Salt ≈ Agua Fria ≈ Gila
Three Rivers Historical Society

Three Rivers Elects Officers

At the January meeting of the Three Rivers Historical Society new officers were elected. They are President, David Meese, 1st Vice-President, Mark Pelletier, 2nd Vice President, Laura Kaino, Secretary, Sally Kiko, Treasurer, Betty Lynch; Board members continuing to serve are JoAnn Gongaware, Diane Fekete, Wendy Neely and Al Field.

Following the election, the Board members shared ideas that they had developed at planning meetings. They covered items like membership growth, increase our presence in the community, share our treasures, and enhance community partnerships, fundraising and officer succession on the board. As each topic was discussed, our membership added other ideas and shared suggestions which were greatly appreciated by the board!



Historic Photos in Our Community

We at Three Rivers Historical Society are disappointed that we don't yet have a museum to display our wonderful photos and artifacts. Until that day comes, we occasionally have an opportunity to share those photos in other ways.

This past year we have been contacted by two companies requesting to use our photos as a part of their décor. A.M. Carlier Design, LLC, approached us on behalf of a medical building that was doing some redecorating and wanted to feature historic photos. It was fun to review some of our collection of photos and see what appealed to someone from outside our community. The historic photos can be seen in the side halls on both floors of the Palm Valley Medical Plaza building, 13657 W McDowell Rd., Goodyear. The photos are enlarged and beautifully matted and framed.

More recently, Harkins Theaters contacted us by way of the City of Goodyear asking for some photos to use in the bar area of the new theater at Estrella Falls. Next time you go the movies at Harkins Estrella Falls take a closer look at the bar area and find the historic photos.

Perryville, AZ

It happened again! A request for information sent me to the archives and our local historians. Since I put in a bit of work to get the information for the request, I decided to use the information for an article for “The Quarterly.” Killing two birds with one stone, as the saying goes. Thanks to our local historians with great memories for detail, I have a story to tell.

In the Three Rivers Historical Society archives we are blessed with photos of early Perryville, thanks to donor Beverly Francis, other members of her family, Jean Stewart and Ted Wooten, filled in the blanks for us. Unfortunately, our information only goes back to 1930 when the town was already in business.

It is believed that the town took its name from Carmine Perry. He owned the store and named it the Perryville Store. The Wooten family arrived in Perryville about 1930 in the middle of the Great Depression. Their father had lost his home and job and had moved around the Buckeye Valley with his wife and six children doing various kinds of work to feed his family. He and his wife landed a job running the Perryville Store. Jean says her folks probably had no experience running a store and had a soft heart for the many poor families. They extended credit that was not honored and eventually had to leave the job.



At that time Perryville had many small rental cabins and many unemployed people. Between the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl times were extremely tough. Families that had lost everything traveled west searching for jobs. Vacant land often

sprouted tents to shelter families that stopped to pick cotton or perform other farm jobs to support their families and buy gas to move on, looking for a better life.

The Wooten family moved about a mile east established a home and raised a family of nine children. The store continued to play an important part in their lives. Families in the area went there to shop and socialize. A typical shopping list would include flour, lard, sugar, salt, baking powder, cornmeal and pinto beans. With their vegetable garden and chickens they had an adequate diet. The local families also came to Perryville for drinking water. Water in that area was notoriously hard and of poor quality. And, as kids have always done, if they had a spare nickel they would walk to the store for a soda or candy. Other customers of the little store were POWs from the nearby POW camp on the northeast corner of Van Buren and Citrus, who would come, accompanied by guards, to spend the little cash they earned doing farm work for local farmers. (continued on page 4)

Historic Happy Hour

History buffs enjoyed a pleasant afternoon at We Olive on November 5th. We Olive at 1721 W. Dysart Rd., Suite A101, provided a beautiful setting. City of Avondale and Three Rivers Historical Society displayed photos and sought answers. Both entities had old unidentified photos and hoped attendees could help identify the occasion or individuals in the images.

City of Avondale brought their new upright displays that tell of Billy Moore and the history of Avondale, including a timeline and photos. They also had an album of photos that lacked identification. Three Rivers brought photos that needed more information, usually to identify individuals in the photos.

Photo displays and lots of reminiscing took place on the patio. Inside were Light Bites and wine to enjoy. Hosts Vaughn and Karen Watson were perfect hosts and even provided photos of the event. Our guests seem to enjoy themselves; nothing like a beautiful Arizona day and history enthusiasts remembering the past. Thanks to City of Avondale for doing much of the planning with We Olive and allowing us to be a part of it.



Dear Members and Friends:

The purpose of this letter is to give you an update on the state of the Society and to encourage your participation as a paid membership and committee volunteer. Whether your history in the southwest valley is multi-generational, or you a newcomer, there is a place for you in the Three Rivers Historical Society.

The Society Board recently held a retreat spanning two meetings to review the organization's accomplishments since its inception in 2004 and to create viable and significant goals for the future of our organization. Some of our highlighted accomplishments include:

An extensive library of video and audio interviews of local residents and guest speaker presentations

A colorful and informative Quarterly Newsletter

History of Goodyear book, co-authored by Denise Bates, PhD and Board Member Sally Kiko

Docents for Goodyear Mobile History Museum

Participation at local events, collaboration with Litchfield Historical Society and other community involvement

After the retreat, the Board shared the primary areas of focus at our January public meeting, and received enthusiastic member input and feedback. These goals and action items include the following topics:

Increase our Membership

Hold evening meetings in larger venues on a quarterly basis

Conduct field trips to farms and/or places of archaeological interest

Develop membership committee

Increase our Presence in Community

Publish a calendar of events (3RHS and other local activities)

Expand our website and social media

Increase our networking and interaction with service clubs, community organizations, local news media, schools, etc. Provide speakers as requested.

Share our Assets

Find permanent or temporary physical space or create a mobile display

Showcase our items on the website

Build our own Museum; join with other museum

Enhance Community Partnerships

Avondale, Goodyear and other local cities

Build committees

Reach out to schools

Fundraising

Recruit sponsors to pay printing costs for newsletter

Create a signature event that aligns with our mission

Develop a funding strategy such as grants, field trips, 50/50 raffle, sales, etc.

Your involvement is essential to the future of our Society. As a non-profit, we need financial support through paid memberships and fundraisers to meet our printing, storage and other administrative expenses.

There are many annual membership options available to suit every need:

Student	\$5
Single	\$15
Family	\$25
Business/Professional	\$45
Contributor	\$100
Benefactor	\$250
Lifetime	\$500 (one-time payment)

If you don't have email or prefer a phone call: Sally Kiko, 623-386-1397 treasurer@3rhsaz.org

Society support also includes involvement in committees to develop and implement action plans to reach our goals. Your participation is needed and appreciated. Please let us know if you are willing to serve in 2017 in one of the following areas:

- _____ Membership
- _____ Fundraising
- _____ Community Presence & Partnerships
- _____ Asset Sharing & Management
- _____ Assist at an event

Please contact one of the following to let us know how you would like to help. We need your participation and ideas.

president@3rhsaz.org

secretary@3rhsaz.org

Thank You Sponsors!

Business and professionals who elect to be business/professional members help sponsor this newsletter.

Please join me in thanking Sparkling Clean (Larry Baker) and Frank Ross, Attorney for their support.

If you are a business owner or manager or a professional consider selecting that level of membership so that you will be acknowledged in every issue of "The Quarterly."

Our History, Our Rivers

The Three Rivers Historical Society is named in honor of the three rivers that converge in our area. Rivers have always attracted settlement since water is vital to life. Rivers also provide paths for explorers. Our rivers are no different. Native peoples lived and farmed near the Agua Fria, the Salt and the Gila Rivers. Early European explores and settlers followed the rivers searching for settlements, gold and furs.

The largest of the three rivers is the Gila River. It originates in Sierra County in western New Mexico on the western slopes of the Continental Divide in the Black Range. The Gila headwaters are surrounded by a varied landscape that includes a large stand of Ponderosa Pines and plentiful wildlife ranging from wild turkeys, eagles and grouse, to deer, elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep javelin, cougars and black bear. In New Mexico and on into Arizona to about Solomon, Arizona, the Gila is navigable during spring snowmelt and after summer and fall storms.

In 1924, Aldo Leopold, a scientist, conservationist and professor at the University of Wisconsin, convinced the US Forest Service that the headwaters of the Gila River should be designated the world's first primitive area. It set the stage for the Wilderness Act of 1964. The Gila became the nation's first congressionally designated Wilderness and is the largest Wilderness Area in New Mexico.

Our Rivers (con't from pg 4)

The Coolidge Dam on the Gila River is thirty-one miles southeast of Globe and forms the San Carlos Lake. It was built from 1924 to 1928 by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. It was named for President Coolidge in 1930. The dam was part of the San Carlos Indian Irrigation Project and formerly generated electricity with both a hydroelectric plant and a diesel electric plant. A flood in 1983 rendered the hydroelectric station inoperable. The Painted Rock Dam, another dam that crosses the Gila River near Gila Bend, protects that area from flooding should we experience heavy rains.

The history along the Gila is interesting. Indigenous peoples were responsible for creating large, complex civilizations along both the Salt and Gila Rivers. They built canal systems that were reused in the early days of Phoenix. Hernando de Alarcón was the first European believed to see the Gila. He was a Spanish explorer and missionary who traveled along its tributary, possibly the San Pedro in 1538. A map drawn by his expedition shows the river as the Miraflores or Brazos de la Miraflores.

After the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, the Gila River served as a part of the border between the United States and Mexico. However, in 1853, the Gadsden Purchase extended the American Territory to Arizona's present southern border.

In the past, The Gila and its main tributary, the Salt River were both perennial streams carrying large volumes of water. Irrigation and municipal water use have turned both into usually dry rivers. Both rivers are still capable of carrying large volumes of water following heavy rains and/or deep snow in the mountains. Historically, the Gila Rivers was navigable by large riverboats from the Colorado River to near Phoenix. It had a width that varied from 150 to 1,200 feet and a depth of 2 to 40 feet. That is hard to believe as we gaze at a very dry river today.

This dry river also foiled the plans of German POW's who attempted an escape from the Papago Park Prisoner of War Camp in 1944. They based their plans on a stolen highway map of Arizona which showed the Gila River leading to the Colorado River, which would lead to Mexico. The map, of course, showed a nice blue waterway, but turned out to be a dry riverbed.

The Salt and Agua Fria Rivers will be featured in a future issue.

Perryville (con't from pg 2)

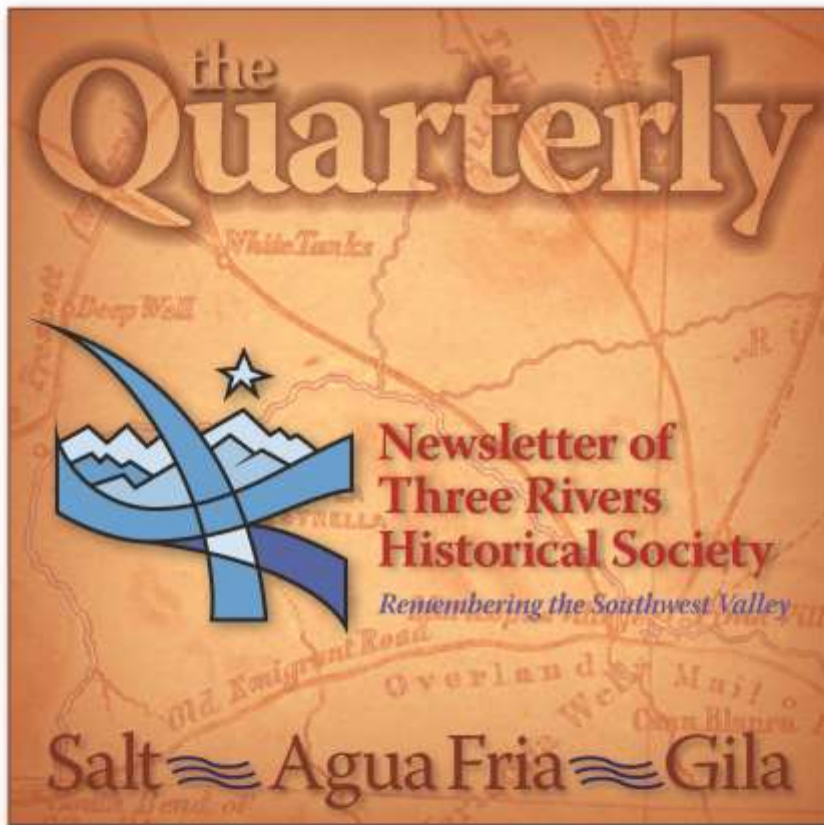
Beside the Perryville store, there was a garage, a bar, service station and a church. The favorite feature of the town, at least as far as the kids were concerned, was the swimming pool. Everyone I talked to remembered the pool. Jean Stewart remembered not knowing how to swim, but was fearless enough to climb up to the tall diving board and jump off with her older brothers there to catch her and swim her back to the side of the pool. She would continue doing it as long as the boys were willing to catch her! Tom Ruth, who lived in Perryville 1984-85, said that when he arrived in Perryville the pool was about half full of trash, but before he left it was filled in.

Any readers that have lived in this area most of their lives will remember hearing rumors about "Froggy Bottom." My sources dispel the rumor and place the brothel about a mile out of town. The building was a large barracks that had been previously used at the POW Camp at Citrus Ave and Van Buren. It was owned and operated by "Mama Lucille." It was a rough place with frequent shootings, stabbings and fights. It was a bar that "nice" people didn't admit to knowing about.

Rick Kitchens, whose family farmed in the area, recalls being sent by his father to tend to the irrigation. The tire on his motorcycle blew out near Froggy Bottom and his only choice was to go inside to use the phone. There was no phone in the establishment, but Mama Lucille rescued the young teen from some of the customers who were not happy to see him there and drove him to the gas station to get assistance. Needless to say, Rick's ride with Mama Lucille was the talk of the town for a while.

The local prison, built in 1981, was named Perryville. Do you suppose that was because there were fewer residents and voters to object? Also nearby is the Perryville airstrip. Built as an auxiliary airfield for Luke AFB in the early 1940's, it was used as a drag strip starting in about 1954. In 1955, it soared to fame when the NHRA National Championship held at Great Bend, Kansas had its final days rained out. Two months later the final racing was done at Perryville with a reported attendance of 6,000 fans. In 1958, the Commander at Luke closed the airstrip to racing.

As I told the man who asked the question, yes, there is and was a Perryville. For a closer look drive west on Yuma Road to Perryville Road and you'll find yourself smack dab in downtown Perryville.



Yes, I want to join Three Rivers Historical Society!

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$5* | <input type="checkbox"/> Single \$15* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25* | <input type="checkbox"/> Business/Professional \$45* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor \$100* | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$250* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime \$500 | * Yearly Fee |

Join _____ Renew _____ Call me to volunteer _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ (Evening) _____

Cell _____ e-mail _____

Check enclosed in the amount of \$ _____

A receipt will be issued to you.

Make out your check and mail to:

Three Rivers Historical Society,
P.O. Box 7251, Goodyear, AZ 85338

Three Rivers Historical Society is a 501 (c) 3
non-profit organization



Three Rivers Historical Society

Remembering the Southwest Valley

P.O. Box 7251, Goodyear, AZ 85338

David Meese, President

Mark Pelletier, 1st V.P.

Laura Kaino, 2nd V.P.

Sally Kiko, Secretary

Betty Lynch, Treasurer

Board Members

*Joann Gongaware, Diane Fekete, Wendy Neely, Al Field,
David Meese*

The Quarterly

Editors: Sally Kiko and Diane Fekete

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3RHS Meetings

We meet on the third Tuesday of each month at 3pm, at Goodyear Library, 14455 W. Van Buren, Goodyear, Arizona. Notices of date, location and guest speaker are e-mailed. Be sure we have your correct address.

E-mail Sally at kskiko@cox.net

